

“Little Gems”

The Preservation Issue



Clerk of the Circuit Court - Gary M. Clemens
Historic Records

Volume 2 Issue 3 June 2017

PHOTOGRAPH BY
WINSLOW WILLIAMS

Land Records & Deed Research

Loudoun is one of only a few counties in the Commonwealth that has records dating from its formation in 1757 when it split from Fairfax County. The Historic Records and Deed Research division includes court records from 1757-1980's and land records from 1757-present. Research can be conducted by using both in-house and online databases as well as paper indexes. Our staff can provide guidance and suggestions to start your research but **cannot provide research services or legal advice**. To prepare for your visit please review our online links to indexes and county databases which provide a starting point in your records research.

If you Visit the Archives

There is a court order that establishes court security protocols that serve the best interests of all visitors to the various courts and court-related offices in the Courts Complex. Therefore, electronic mobile devices such as cellphones with cameras, laptop computers, and electronic tablets are currently not permitted in the Courts Complex. To assist the patrons of the Historic Records/Archives research room, the Clerk's Office provides computer workstations with internet access so our patrons can review the websites of other historic records museums and historic records research organizations to assist with research needs in the Clerk's Office.

Front Page

Shower for Charlotte Lake May 18, 1954, Clerk of the Circuit Court

Standing

J.T Martz, Clerk of the Circuit Court
Reed Galleher, Treasurer
C. Frank Reed, Deputy Sheriff
Vernon Ford, Treasurer's Office
Charlotte Lake, Clerk's Office
Bonnie Sue Hall, Secretary for the Commonwealth Attorney
Louisa Skinner, Treasurer's Office
Howard Welsh, Commissioner of Revenue Office
Lucy Bagwell, School Board Office
J.R.H. Alexander, Circuit Court Judge
Ann Van Deventer, Commissioner of Revenue Office
Virginia Throckmorton, School Board Office
Nellie Hammerly, Clerk's Office
Naomi Nixon, Commissioner of Revenue Office
Elizabeth Hammerly, Clerk's Office
Doris Faulkner, Clerk Trial Justice Court

Table

Patsy Ely Rollins, Clerk's Office
Penny Alexander, Judge Alexander's granddaughter
Sybil Wanner, Zoning Administrator
Grace Popkins
George Weaver, Law Office of Hall and Hall

Photo by Winslow Williams



“Little Gems”

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| <i>The Manager’s Order Book</i> | 3 | Historic Records and Deed Research Staff |
| <i>Evolution of the “Little Gems”</i> | 4 | |
| <i>A Chat with Mr. Fishback</i> | 5 | Gary M. Clemens, Clerk of Circuit Court |
| <i>Digitizing the Historical Records</i> | 8 | Eric Larson, Historic Records Manager |
| <i>Process for Preserving Historical Records: Through the “Eyes” of the Criminal Papers</i> | 10 | Sarah Markel, Historic Records Clerk |
| <i>Tips For Preserving Your Records At Home</i> | 13 | Alyssa Fisher, Historic Records Clerk |

Clerk of the Circuit Court

Attn: Historic Records

P.O. Box 550

Leesburg, VA 20178

703-737-8775

Email

Clerk-Archives@loudoun.gov

Volunteers

John Fishback

Rose Marie Walter

THE MANAGER'S ORDER BOOK:

BY ERIC LARSON, HISTORIC RECORDS MANAGER



Louisa Hutchison and John Fishback in 2007

This edition of "Little Gems" is dedicated to Louisa S. Hutchison who passed away on May 10, 2017. Louisa served as a long time Deputy Clerk and volunteer with the Clerk of the Circuit Court. Louisa Settle Skinner was born at "Diamond Hill" in Aldie, Virginia to Robert I. Skinner and Virginia A. Hutchison in 1922. After graduating from Aldie High School in 1938, she attended and graduated from Strayer College in 1941. From 1941-1948 she worked for the Tri County Electric Cooperative.

Louisa started her career with the county in 1948 as a Deputy Treasurer in the Treasurer's Office. In 1959, she joined the Clerk of the Circuit Court's Office as a Deputy Clerk and retired from the office in 1972. Louisa married Thomas Beverly Hutchison, who was Loudoun's Commissioner of Revenue, in March 1969 at Little River Baptist Church.

In retirement, Louisa volunteered for the Clerk of the Circuit Court working with the county's historical court records. John Fishback, the Clerk's first Historic Records Manager, said "she knew the court records inside and out." It was Louisa who came up with "Little Gems," a collection of unique court documents she kept in a box (See the "Little Gems" article). Her greatest contribution to the preservation of court records was the sorting, filing and indexing of Loudoun's Chancery cases from 1757-1940s. She also organized other groups of court records and compiled histories on the county sheriffs, judges, court house, and other county and court officials.

Louisa published two books widely used by genealogists: *Index to Loudoun County, Virginia Wills 1757-1850* and *Apprentices, Poor Children and Bastards, Loudoun County, Virginia 1757-1850*. Mr. Fishback said that Louisa kept filing cabinets in her basement filled with her years of research. Mrs. Hutchison will be missed by her genealogy friends and colleagues, but her contributions to the preservation of the court's records can be experienced every day at the court house.

Evolution of the “Little Gems”

BY : SARAH MARKEL



Take a moment to look at the picture to the left. What are your first impressions? Old, dusty, boring, or maybe a mystery. Most people would look at this box and think nothing of it. Well I can tell you that they would be wrong!

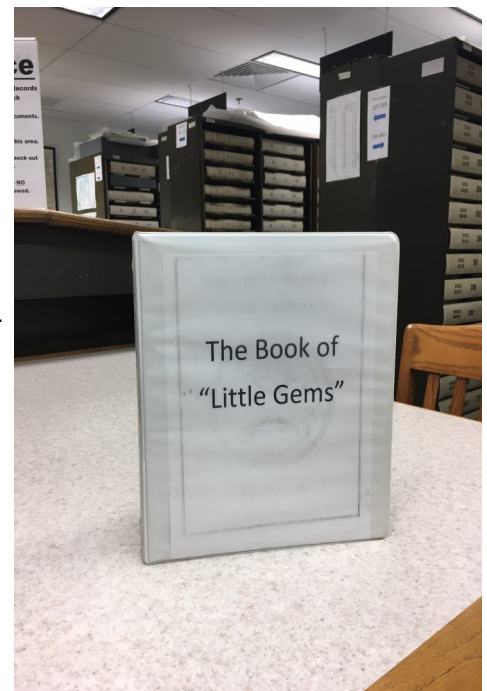
The box you see in the picture to the left, is the original “Little Gems” box. This idea of a “Little Gems” box was none other than Mrs. Louisa Hutchison’s. As Mrs. Hutchison went about her work day in the Clerk’s office she would come across a “new” find and add it to the box. When people came to tour the Court House or to visit she would show them the treasures she had found.

It did not take long before the “Little Gems” box was combined with the Clerk’s book of notes referencing interesting finds to make the “Little Gems” book we know today.

Today the original Clerk’s notebook is no longer with the Clerk’s Office. But, have no fear the Clerk of the Court copied the book in its entirety and gave copies to several title searchers.

Thus when the original book could not be located one of these gentleman was kind enough to bring us his copy so that we could learn from the Clerk’s and Mrs. Hutchison’s research. Pictured below you can see the new binder we have placed the “Little Gems” book in.

On a personal note, I had the great privilege to meet Mrs. Hutchison when she came into Archives a few years back. I offered to lift the deed books she wanted to view for her, to which she replied “I can do it, my eye sight is going, but moving these keeps me young.” I find myself looking at Mrs. Hutchison’s picture on the wall behind my desk everyday. I often think to my interaction with her and strive to have such a wonderful spirit. Mrs. Hutchison was an amazing lady who paved the way for Clerks for generations to come. I will always remember her with a spring in her step, forever young at heart.



A Chat with Mr. Fishback by Eric Larson

Mr. John Fishback was the first Historic Records Manager for the Clerk of the Circuit Court, from 2004 until his retirement in 2014. It was John's leadership that brought the court's historic records from the backrooms and basements of the courthouse and made them accessible to the public for the first time. John worked for over 26 years in the clerk's office, and during that time he saw great changes in the size, service, records and technology used by the circuit court. John and I sat down and had a chat about his days in the Clerk's office.

How long has your family lived in Loudoun County?

My father's side (Fishback) were tenant farmers who moved back and forth from Loudoun and Fauquier Counties. Dad was born at Shadow Mountain Farm which is located off Rt.15 across from Oatlands Plantation. My family moved permanently to Loudoun in the 1940s. My mom and dad bought a house in Paeonian Springs in 1958 where I grew up and graduated from Loudoun Valley High School in 1970. My mother's family (Cooper) has been in Loudoun County since the 1700s.



Do you remember the first time you came to the court house?

I think I visited the court house and grounds in the 1960s when I came to visit a friend who lived on Church Street. I remember seeing the machine guns (The same machine guns are on display in the Historic Records Division) out on the court house grounds.

Archives First Home from 2004-2010

When did you first get interested in history and family genealogy?

In the 1960s, my grandmother Cooper gave me a diary that listed when all the children were born. My grandmother Fishback gave me a box of family photographs. When I was five, grandmother Fishback who was 74 at the time, took me to Urbana, Maryland to see the family graveyard.

Are you still working on your family genealogy?

Right now I'm trying to find my great grandfather on both my mother and father's side.

When did you start working for the Clerk of the Circuit Court, and what were some of the positions you held before you became the Historic Records Manager?

I started working for the Clerk of the Circuit Court in 1988 as a part time employee. I knew about the Clerk's office from doing some research. I started as a microfilm technician and worked at the front counter. After six months, I became a full time employee. For many years, I was a court room clerk for Judge Penn, Judge Horne and Judge Chamblin, but mostly for Judge Horne. I then became the docket manager which morphed into the supervisor of the file room that included the civil and criminal division. I became the Historic Records Manager in 2004, but even before I was the archive's manager, people would come to me with questions about the old records.

Where were the court’s historic records located in the clerk’s office when you started?

Before there was an archives, the records were stored in the structure that is now the main entrance to the court complex. The land records were on the first floor, current files were on the second floor, and the historic court order books, judgments and chancery papers were in the basement.

How did you learn to perform preservation work on court documents?

I worked with Louisa Hutchison who taught me about the records. It wasn’t until I became the Historic Records Manager that I learned how to do preservation work. I received training from the Library of Virginia. I would also talk to representatives from the conservation companies who did conservation work with the Library of Virginia, but most of my training was from trial and error.

When and how was the court’s Archives established?

After Gary was elected (Gary Clemens Clerk of the Circuit Court 2000-present) I kind of got his ear about starting an archives, but it wasn’t very practical in 2000. Every year at my review with Gary, I would put a bug in his ear about creating an archive’s department. It must have worked. Gary went to the Board of Supervisors in 2004 for a Historic Records Manager position in the Clerk’s office and got it. I had to apply and interview for the position.

Where was archives located in the office once the division was established, and what was your first big project as Historic Records Manager?

The archives was in the basement wing of the court house. The new archives division had to share space with the civil and criminal file room from 2004-2010. They just built a wall with a door between the two rooms. My first project was with the Chancery papers. I had to apply for a Library of Virginia grant to flat file and box the Chancery cases. After that was completed, I applied for another grant to scan them.



What was your greatest achievement in Historic Records?

Obviously the Chancery files, but also setting up a slave and Free Black index. I had to go through the court packets and pull out papers on slaves and Free Blacks. I’m still working on that project as a volunteer.

John’s favorite duty as Historic Records Manager, preserving the court documents

What was your greatest challenge?

Getting money to do projects and having enough space.

What was the greatest change you experienced as the Historic Records Manager?

The use of computers. The Chancery Project impacted the handling of documents (it provided greater access to the records through digitization). We went from a typed index to a computer index and scans. The Chancery project brought the archives into the 21st century!

Do you have a favorite document or set of papers in the court records?

That’s like picking your favorite child! I have to say the Chancery records. They give you a glimpse into other people’s lives. Chancery records can tell you a person’s occupation and the material they owned. In land cases there could be a plat of the property and newspaper clippings that list the type of structures on the property. There are always the unusual cases that may seem strange to us today, like suing over a horse with a bad leg.

As a volunteer, what are some of the projects you are working on?

I’m flat filing original wills and conserving the Land Tax Books. I started flat filing original wills a few years before I retired (2014). I began with the 1757 wills and now I’m up to 1885! I’m still going through the deed and judgment packs looking for Free Black and slave papers.



John’s court records exhibition celebrating Loudoun County’s 250th anniversary in 2007.

I heard that you have another big project you and your wife are working on at home?

Yes, we are extracting names from the census, newspapers, obituaries, and marriage records from Loudoun County. We take the names and place them in a family chart (Family tree representing family relationships).

Where do you see the department in the next 50 to 100 years?

Hopefully, well preserved and well organized as they are now. More digital imaging to help with preservation.



This interview was about the court’s historic records, but John’s stories of his days as a courtroom clerk and file room supervisor were just as interesting and at times very funny. I still tell John that he should sit in a rocking chair on the portico of the 1894 court house, and reminisce to the public on the court’s history and his years in the clerk’s office!

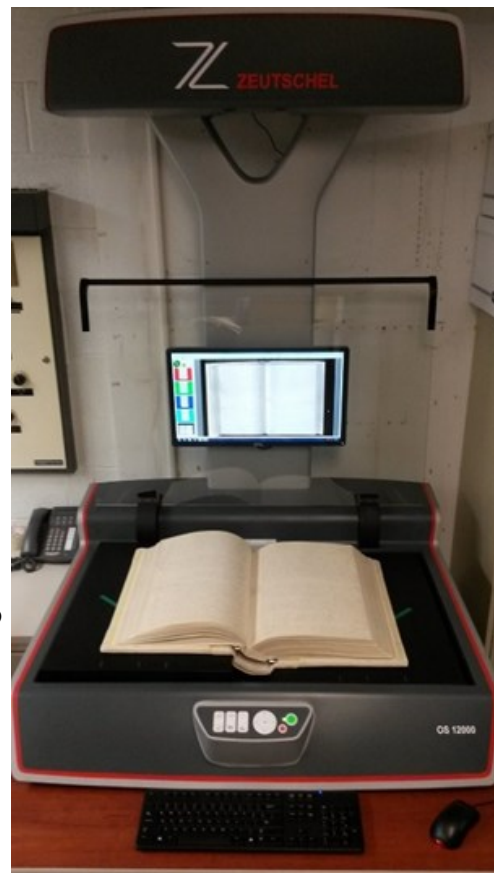
John speaking to a group of Loudoun County Public School social study teachers at our 2017 Black History event.

Digitizing the Historical Records

By Alyssa Fisher

While the Historic Records & Deed Research division is extremely fortunate to have most of its records from 1757 to present day, this blessing also comes with added responsibility. Preservation of the records is always emphasized in any decisions, programs, and projects pursued by Historic Records Staff. While original copies are best, digital versions insure a clear image of the original document. Digitizing records allows the Clerk's Office to maintain a duplicate version of original documents, increase researcher's access to records, and decrease the amount of preservation hazards that documents are often exposed to. All of the early deed books and will books beginning in 1757 have been digitized.

Historical documents in the Clerk's Office are digitized on two different scanners. Oversized books and large documents are scanned on a Zeutschel Book Scanner which has the capability of taking images of multiple documents at a high resolution all at one time. This scanner can also scan in three shades, black and white, color, and grayscale in one scan. Filters enable the operator to make the images clearer and straighter. Adjustable digital clips allow the operator to crop the scan to a suitable shape and size. Smaller documents are often scanned with a Fujitsu flatbed scanner on which grayscale or color images can be scanned.



Zeutschel Book Scanner

Paper records are vulnerable to a number of preservation hazards, and many can be destroyed by various disasters including fire, water damage, pests, human contact, and natural deterioration over time. By digitizing our records today, a high resolution copy of the original document is safely stored to protect against lost

information in case damage occurs to the records in the future.

Digital versions of records can also help us determine the amount of deterioration the documents face over time. In the mid-twentieth century preservationists used lamination to attempt to preserve historical records. Unfortunately, we now know this method is acidic and causes the paper to deteriorate faster. Efforts are being made to deacidify these records. If we had the ability to digitize records before they were laminated, we would be able to see visual evidence of the accelerated deterioration. Recognizing this now, allows us to check the effectiveness of newer preservation methods and supplies by comparing original records with the digitized versions.

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| (1) PLACE OF BIRTH County of <u>Orange</u> District of <u>Orange</u> Inc. Town of <u>Bluemont</u> City of <u>Bluemont</u> | | COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS Registration District No. <u>14</u> File No. <u>3</u> Primary Registration Dist. No. <u>3</u> Registered No. <u>3</u> | |
| (2) FULL NAME OF CHILD <u>James & Helen Armstrong</u> | | (3) DATE OF BIRTH <u>July 14 1912</u> | |
| (4) SEX OF CHILD <u>Boy</u> | (5) Year, month, day of birth <u>July 14 1912</u> | (6) Month, day, year of birth <u>July 14 1912</u> | (7) Length of birth <u>5 ft. 10 in.</u> |
| (8) FATHER Name <u>James Armstrong</u> Residence of father <u>Bluemont</u> | (9) MOTHER Name <u>Helen Armstrong</u> Residence of mother <u>Bluemont</u> | (10) AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>20</u> | (11) AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>20</u> |
| (12) COLOR OF CHILD <u>White</u> | (13) BIRTHPLACE <u>Bluemont</u> | (14) COLOR OF MOTHER <u>White</u> | (15) BIRTHPLACE <u>Bluemont</u> |
| (16) OCCUPATION <u>Farmer</u> | (17) OCCUPATION <u>Housewife</u> | (18) Number of children born to this mother, including present birth <u>3</u> | |
| CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR MIDWIFE | | | |
| (19) I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, who was <u>born alive</u> at <u>8 P.M.</u> on the date above stated. | | | |
| (20) (Signature) <u>James Armstrong</u> | | | |
| (21) Address of Physician or Midwife <u>Bluemont</u> | | | |
| (22) Filed <u>July 14 1912</u> <u>James Armstrong</u> | | | |

Scan of a birth record from 1912
Birth Record 1912; 14.3

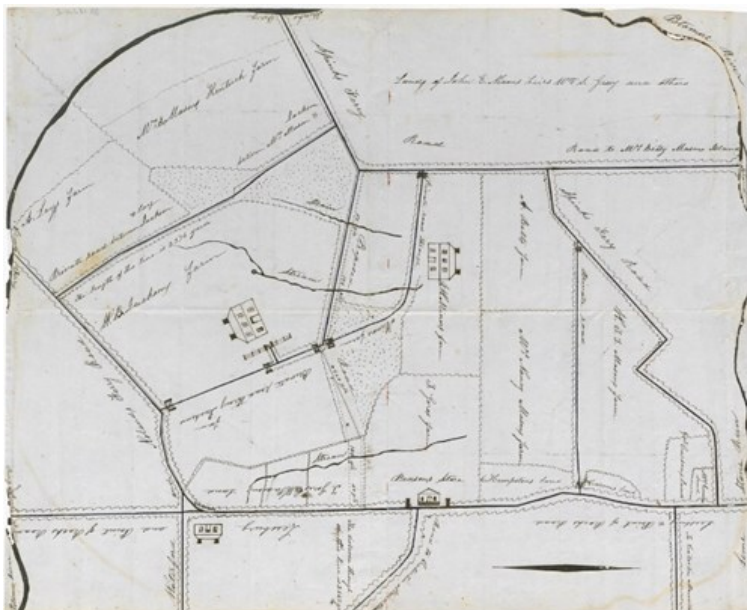
Many records are compiled on the public access computers in the courthouse. Several of the records viewable in the Public Access System are older, and are somewhat illegible as they are digitized versions of microfilm. These old scans have been improved with newer scans, which will eventually be loaded into the Public Access System in the Clerk's Office for better viewing. Early deed books and will books that are not currently on the Public Access System have been digitized and will be added to the system in the future.

Before digitization, many of the deed books, will books, and other documents had to be manually placed on a copy machine which exposed the record to preservation hazards. Placing the books on the copy machine can tear pages, break old spines and binding, and expose the document to light. In addition, several of the books are oversized, forcing historic record clerks to make a copy of those pages in two parts. We are now able to print the page off in black and white, or color, in a variety of page sizes without fear of harming the book, or costing patrons more money for two page oversized copies.

Many individuals have concerns about digitization. There is a certain amount of light exposure that occurs during the scanning process, but it is one instance of exposure that can save the record from several instances of light exposure from a photocopy machine. As Historic Records Clerks we also understand the preference of many researchers to see the original source. Even though the deed books and will books are scanned, those records are still available in their original forms for researchers to view. Preservation of the records is foremost among the goals of the Historic Records Division. Digitization of the records allows the division to insure the court records of Loudoun County remain available for future generations.



Fujitsu Flatbed Scanner

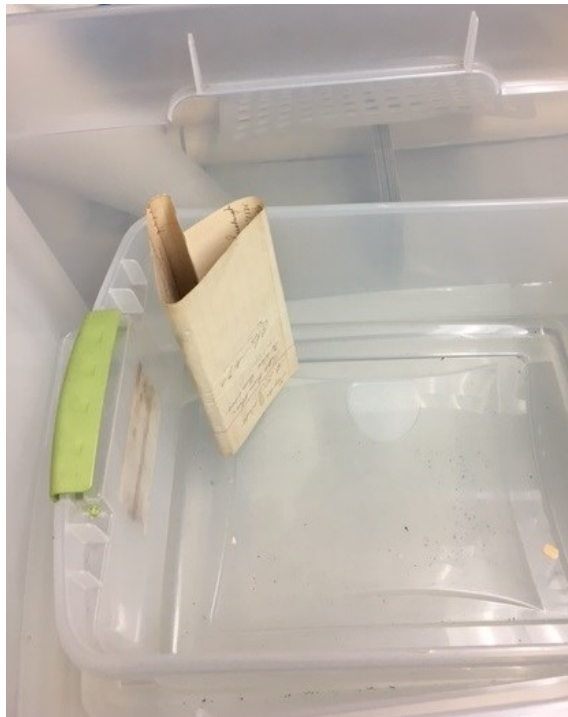


A scan of an oversized plat
from the Road Case Collection
Road Case RR 1854-005

Process for Preserving Historical Records: Through the "Eyes" of the Criminal Papers



I'm just a bundle. Oh. I'm only a bundle and I am sitting here all tied up in red tape.



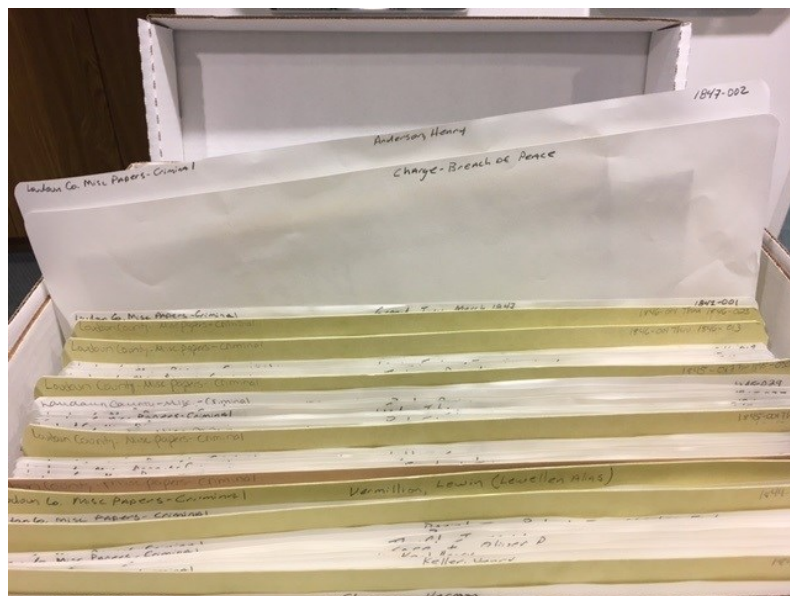
In order to be conserved I have to be unwrapped and put into the spa tank to relax. Think how stiff your joints would be if you were folded up for 200 years.



Once I have had a chance to limber up. I decide to hit the gym. These weights sure get me in shape fast helping to reduce the signs of aging and wrinkles.



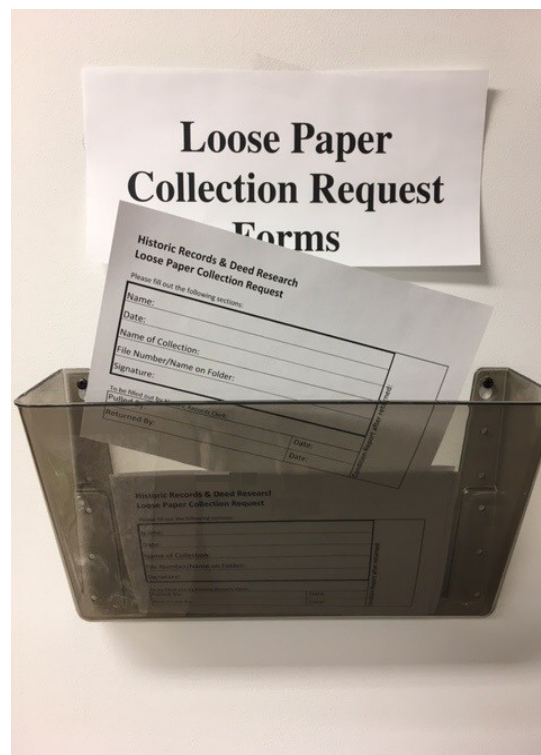
Whew. What a work out. Once I finish at the gym I treat myself to a manicure. Attendants use special heat set tape to mend all of the little tears I have around the edges.



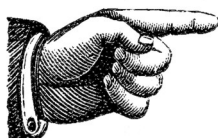
When I finish being mended I am very excited to get a new folder. I was told that this new folder is archival quality and will keep me safe for years to come.



Once I got my new folder I was able to move into my new house. The boxes you see here are all acid free and archival quality. The archivist here say that I will be around for centuries to come. I wonder what new technology I will see?



I hope that you will come and see the newly flat filed and indexed Criminal Records. You never know what story you may uncover. If you want to read a file you just need to fill out a collections form request. It is as easy as that. I hope to see you soon!



Tell us about Your "Little Gems" of Loudoun County History.

Go to www.loudoun.gov/Clerk/LittleGems and complete the "Little Gems" Form. Future editions of our newsletter will highlight a "Little Gem" submitted by our readers. So get researching, the next spotlight may be your discovery!

Ok I am calling
AAA. I need a
ladder.

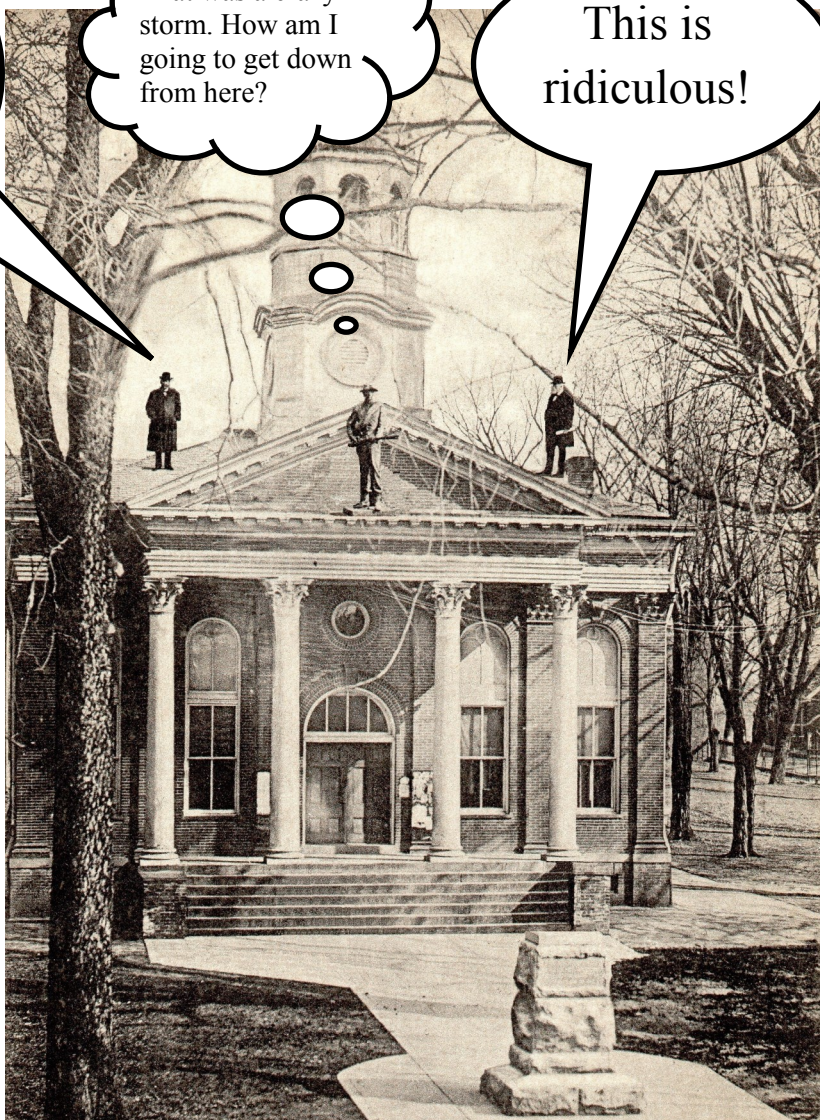
That was a crazy
storm. How am I
going to get down
from here?

This is
ridiculous!

"Where is Archives?"

When customers arrive at the Archives front counter the first thing they say is, "Do you know that you are hidden in the basement?"

Stay tuned Archives fans for future additions of "Little Gems." You never know where these Gentlemen's adventures will take them next..



Tips For Preserving Your Records At Home

Storage:

- ◆ Keep archival materials out of direct sunlight which can cause the paper to fade and deteriorate more quickly.
- ◆ Try to keep records in a cooler environment.
- ◆ Store documents in acid free boxes or acid free folders.
- ◆ Photos should be in acid free folders, sleeves, or boxes.
- ◆ Keep records away from water sources.
- ◆ If framing a photo, be sure to use an acid free mat and UV protected glass.
- ◆ Store records in a safe place away from insects and rodents.
- ◆ Do your research when purchasing acid free storage products, and make sure you buy from a reputable company whose products are truly acid free.
- ◆ Make sure that the containers or folders you purchase are the correct size to prevent unnecessary folds. Folds weaken the paper and can lead to tears or other damage in the future. The fewer folds in a document, the better.
- ◆ It is always a good idea to have photos and documents scanned so that you have a digital version of your records.

Repairs:

- ◆ Do not store items secured with a rubber band. Rubber bands dry rot and can damage records.
- ◆ Do not store items secured with a staple or metal brad. Metal pieces rust over time and damage documents.
- ◆ Do not use scotch tape, masking tape, painters tape, or any other type of tape or adhesive other than an approved archival repair tape.
- ◆ Items like blue prints and photos that “off gas” should be stored in an area where the odor can escape. “Off gas” refers to the strong odor that is expelled from some documents due to chemicals used in the process of creating the document, or the paper composition. If these documents are stored in a sealed container with other documents, all of the documents may take on the smell of the “off gas.”
- ◆ If a document in your collection has been repaired in the past with scotch tape, do not pull the tape off as it can lead to more severe damage. You can wait for the scotch tape to dry up and fall off itself, or you may contact a reputable conservator.

Resources:

How to Preserve Family Papers and Photographs. National Archives <https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives/>

Personal Archiving. Library of Congress
<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/index.html>

2017 PROGRAMS AND NEWSLETTERS

First Friday June 2, 2017 – Preservation Act III

Our June 2016 Open House on the conservation of the court's historic documents was such a hit we brought it back! Learn how Loudoun's court papers have held up against time, history and the environment. The staff will discuss and demonstrate how the records are being preserved in the 21st century.

First Friday October 6, 2017-Rods, Links, and Poles: Historic Maps and Plats in the Court's Historic Records

View the Historic Records staff and volunteers' favorite maps and plats in the court's historic 18th and 19th century deed and chancery records. The Loudoun County Office of Mapping and Geographic Information will exhibit 21st century mapping technology and how it can be used in historic research.

Newsletters

Fall-October 2017

All Open Houses will be held at: Court Complex 18 E. Market St. Leesburg Virginia



Save the Date! June 17, 2017
HISTORIC FAIRFAX COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Celebrate
FAIRFAX COUNTY'S 275TH
Birthday!

Saturday, June 17, 2017
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Historic Fairfax Courthouse

The day's events, which are free and open to the public, will include:

- Family-friendly activities
- Entertainment
- History Exhibits
- Living History
- Performances

...and more!

Visit www.Fairfax275.org for more information.

A Fairfax County, Va., publication

To request reasonable ADA accommodations, call 703-324-5421 or 703-449-1186 (TTY).

Celebrate
Fairfax County's 275th Anniversary
June 17, 2017

The Clerk of the Circuit Court is pleased to partner once again with Fairfax County. Come out and see a display from Loudoun County, and learn about the county's formation from Fairfax County. Staff will be on hand to answer questions.

We hope to see you there!